

Cancer Research UK response to Chief Scientist Office Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Support Structures for NHS Research in Scotland

Cancer Research UK is broadly supportive of the proposals laid out in this Consultation. Research networks play a vital role in supporting research studies and are a key factor in the UK's position as a world leader in medical research. We agree that the adoption of the new NIHR themes in Scotland will promote cross border engagement and collaboration, which will be conducive to a better UK research environment. In our response to the NIHR Clinical Research Network consultation on clinical themes in February 2013, we emphasised the need to consider the impact on devolved nations of these changes and so we especially welcome this move to facilitate UK-wide studies.

We understand the move away from Topic Specific Research Networks towards themes and we welcome the continuation of cancer as a theme. However, elements of the current system do work well, in particular the support of cancer research nurses in clinical trial recruitment. We would ask, therefore, that existing expertise and areas of good practice are acknowledged and that steps are taken to ensure that this expertise is not lost during the transition.

We have some concerns about reduced resource level for cancer patients on clinical trials (which is already less than that available in England) following the reorganisation. We would like to see the level of per patient resource aligned with the level provided by the NCRN.

The fundamental aim of this system should be to enable and support research within Scotland (and, more widely, within the UK) and, as such, we believe that any new system should be pragmatically and flexibly designed in order to facilitate the work of researchers. We would ask that this main aim be borne in mind throughout the implementation of the proposed changes. In this context, we welcome the commitment in the consultation document to ongoing dialogue with the research community.

It is important to note that the Academic and Clinical Central Office for Research and Development (ACCORD) will further change the landscape for support and delivery of clinical research in Scotland. As a new initiative, it is too early to fully assess the impact of ACCORD, but it is an important element of the background against which these reforms are taking place and, as such, we believe it should be taken into account during implementation and evaluation of these changes.

We would also support the inclusion of a national Biorepository Lead and national data Safe Haven Lead within the "faculty" as we recognise the importance of biobanking and access to patient data for researchers.

As with any newly established system, we would ask that these changes are subject to rigorous evaluation and review. Opinions should be sought from those working within the system and there should be sufficient flexibility to adapt to any significant criticisms or problems which emerge once the system is established.

We hope our comments are useful, if you would like to discuss these further please contact Jennifer Boon on [Jennifer.Boon@cancer.org.uk](mailto:Jennifer.Boon@cancer.org.uk) or on 0203 469 5374.

**About Cancer Research UK**



Every year around 300,000 people are diagnosed with cancer in the UK. Every year more than 150,000 people die from cancer. Cancer Research UK is the world's leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. Together with our partners and supporters, Cancer Research UK's vision is to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. We support research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses. In 2012/13, we spent £351 million on research in institutes, hospitals and universities across the UK. The charity's pioneering work has been at the heart of the progress that has already seen survival rates in the UK double in the last forty years. We receive no government funding for our research.